



Basic Steps in Conducting an Evaluation



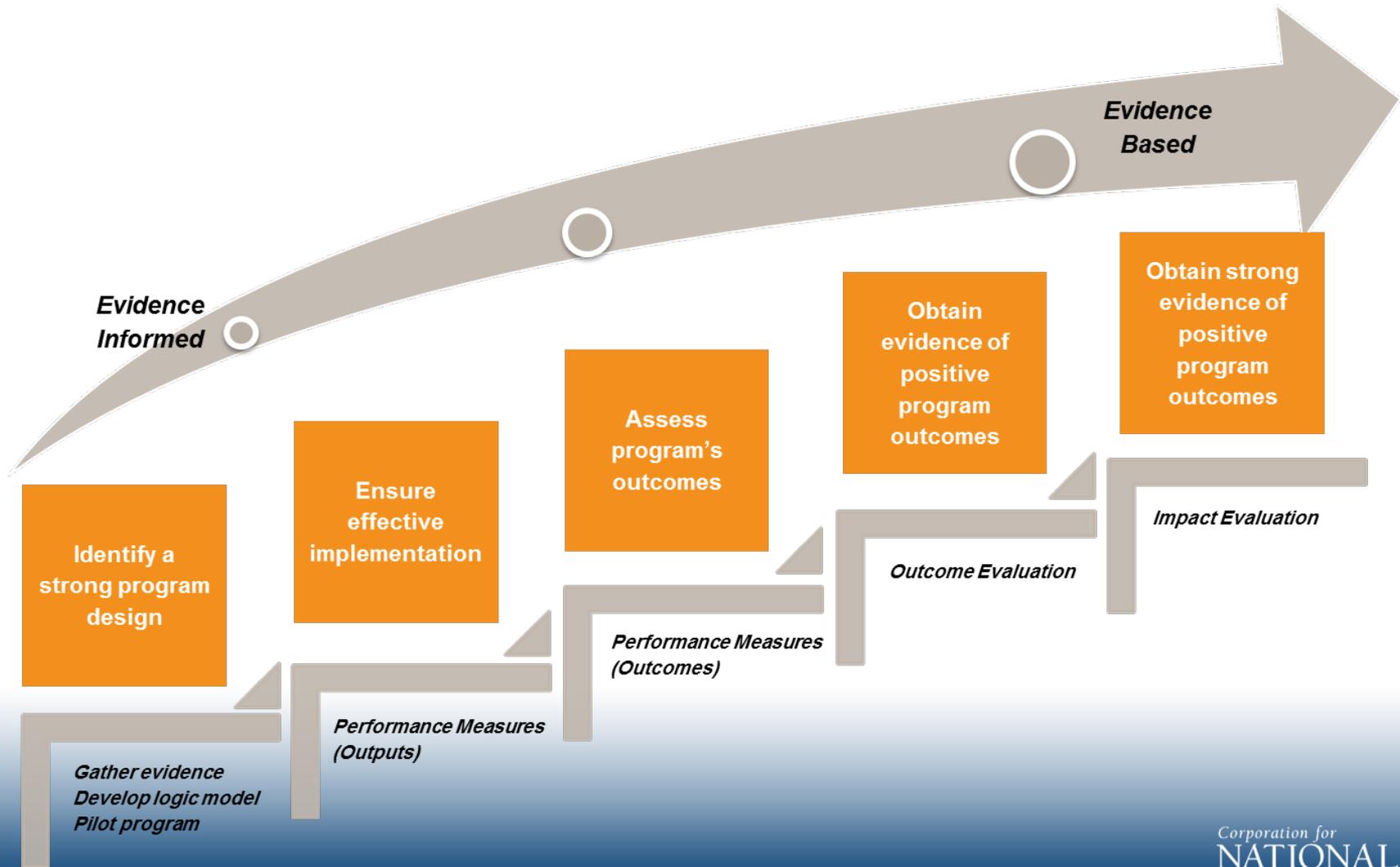
Learning objectives



By the end of this presentation, you will be able to:

- Describe the basic steps for conducting an evaluation
- Plan for an evaluation
- Identify the key components of an evaluation plan
- Identify approaches for collecting and analyzing data
- Understand how to communicate and apply findings for program improvement

Building evidence of effectiveness



Evaluation cycle – Four phases



Basic steps for conducting an evaluation

Phase	Step
Planning	Step 1: Build (or Review) a Program Logic Model Step 2: Define Purpose and Scope Step 3: Budget for an Evaluation Step 4: Select an Evaluator
Development	Step 5: Develop an Evaluation Plan
Implementation	Step 6: Collect Data Step 7: Analyze Data
Action and Improvement	Step 8: Communicate Findings Step 9: Apply Findings and Feedback for Program Improvement

Planning phase steps



Step 1: Build a program logic model

- A logic model can serve as a framework for your written evaluation plan.
- It can help you focus your evaluation by identifying:
 - Questions want/need answered
 - Aspects of program to evaluate
 - Type of evaluation design
 - Information to collect
 - Measures and data collection methods
 - Evaluation timeframe

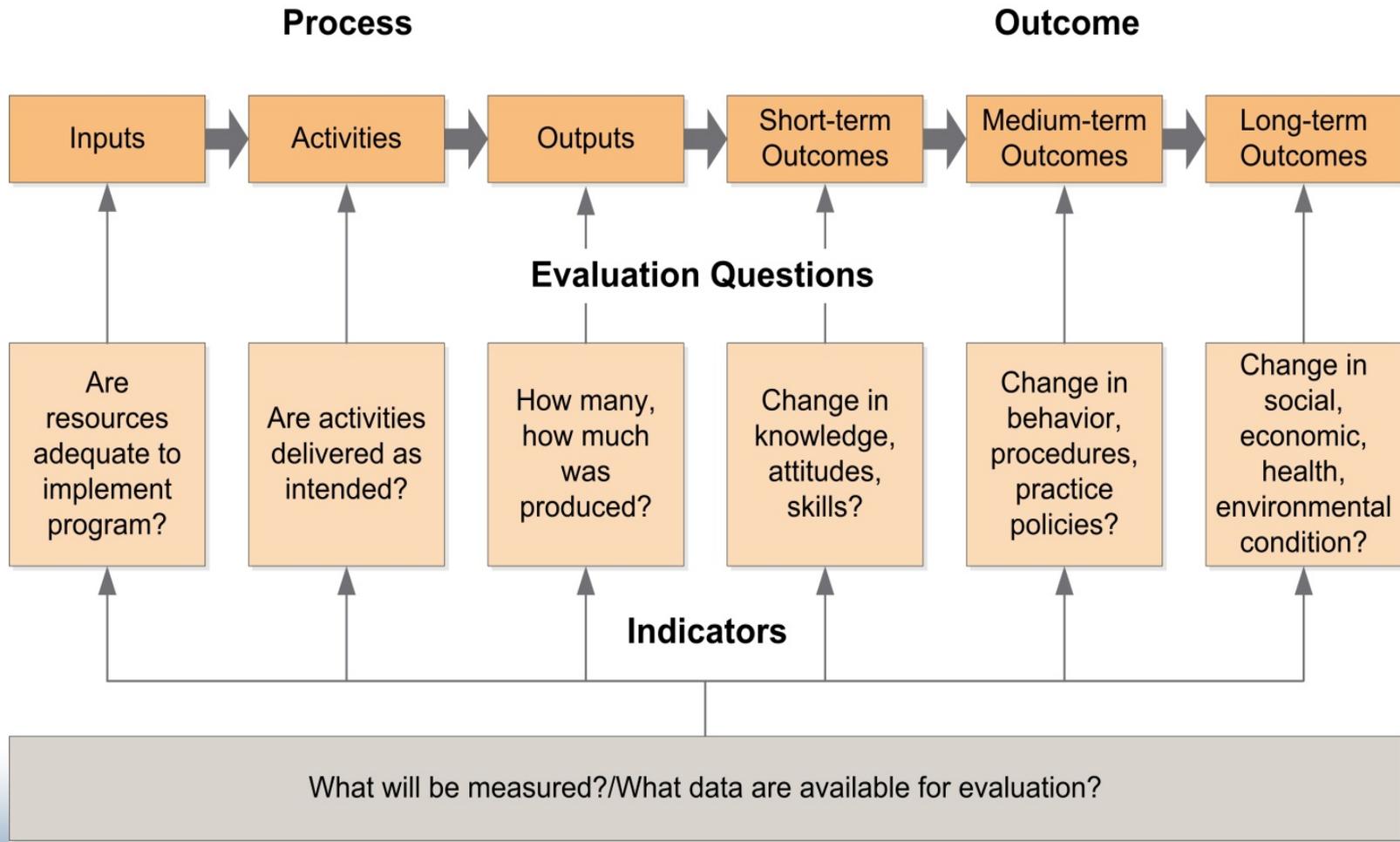
For more information on logic models, CNCS grantees can refer to the module, “How to Develop a Program Logic Model” located on the Knowledge Network.

Step 2: Define purpose and scope

Each evaluation should have a *primary* purpose around which it can be designed and planned.

- Why is the evaluation being done? What do you want to learn?
- How will the results be used? By whom?
- Additional things to consider:
 - Specific program requirements
 - Resources available to carry out the evaluation

Step 2: Define purpose and scope



Group exercise: Develop research questions for a veterans job readiness program

Exercise

The hypothetical veterans program is designed to address unemployment among veterans and their spouses as well as their transition into civilian work and community life.

Using the logic model developed for the veterans program, what might be some potential research questions?

Hypothetical AmeriCorps Veterans Program

Process

Outcomes

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	Outcomes		
			Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
What we invest	What we do	Direct products from program activities	Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, opinions	Changes in behavior or action that result from participants' new knowledge	Meaningful changes, often in their condition or status in life
Funding Staff 100 AmeriCorps State and National members 50 non-AmeriCorps volunteers Research	Conduct job readiness workshops Provide job search assistance Provide peer counseling services Provide referrals to transitioning services Educate potential employers	# individuals participating in workshops # individuals receiving job search assistance # individuals receiving counseling services # families receiving referrals # employers receiving education	Increased confidence in gaining employment Increase in job readiness skills Increased knowledge of effective job search strategies Increased knowledge of community services Increased employer knowledge of hiring benefits	Increase in job placement Increased capacity of families to manage transition from military to civilian work and family life Increased adoption of military-friendly practices by employers	Individuals maintain stable employment Increased family well-being Employers routinely hire veterans and military spouses

Step 3: Budget for an evaluation

Common cost categories:

- Staff time
- Materials, equipment, and supplies
- Travel
- Data collection

Step 3: Budget for an evaluation

Consider questions of:

- Who will conduct it?
 - If *external evaluator*, consider what services are and are not included in their cost
 - If *own staff*, consider cost of time spent on evaluation relative to programmatic tasks
- What will it include and how will it be conducted?
- Will it involve new data collection?
 - If so, at what time points and where?
- Who will manage it?

Step 4: Select an evaluator

- An evaluator is an individual or team of people responsible for leading the evaluation.
- Potential options for an evaluator include:
 - An external source (e.g., consulting firm, college or university personnel, independent consultant)
 - An internal source - program staff member(s)

Step 4: Select an evaluator

A key decision is whether to use an internal staff member or to rely on an external evaluator.

- Factors to consider when making this decision:
 - Purpose of the evaluation
 - Staff workload and expertise
 - Program resources (e.g., financial, necessary computer software, etc.)
 - Specific program requirements (e.g., AmeriCorps grantees \geq \$500,000 are required to conduct an independent evaluation)

Step 4: Select an evaluator

Evaluator's *independence*:

- No conflicts of interest related to the evaluation
- Able to provide an unbiased assessment of the program's outcomes/impacts

Step 4: Select an evaluator

How do you find an external evaluator?

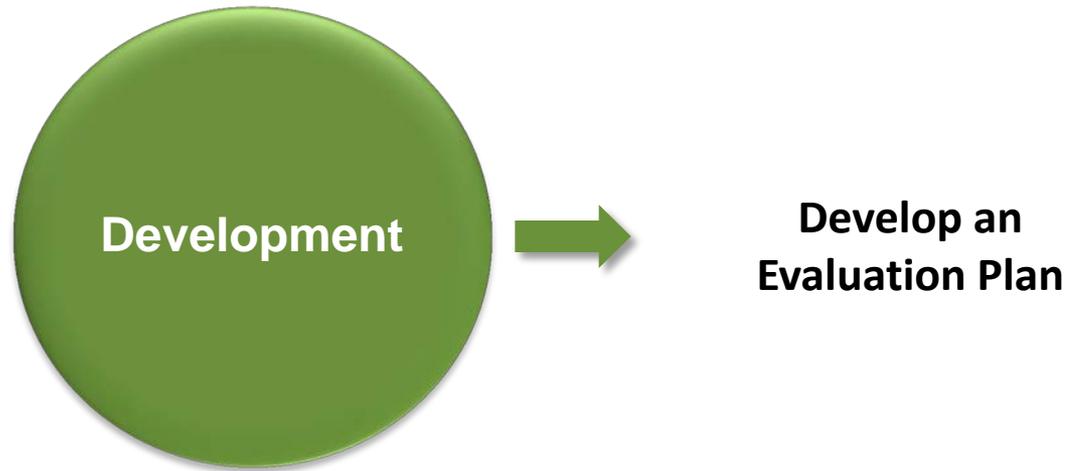
- Academic settings
 - Contact individuals at your local college or university
- Professional settings
 - American Evaluation Association (AEA) website, click on “Find an Evaluator” tab (<http://www.eval.org>)
- Ask others in your network

Step 4: Select an evaluator

Consider whether your potential evaluator has -

- Formal training in evaluation studies
- Experience evaluating similar programs/interventions
- Experience that matches the design, methods, and/or approach of your planned evaluation
- Capacity to handle the scale of your planned evaluation
- Personal style that fits your program staff or organization

Development step: Developing an evaluation plan



What is an evaluation plan?

An evaluation plan is a written document that describes how you will evaluate your program:

- Explains the program model being evaluated
- Provides detailed instructions for the evaluation
- Describes and justifies the evaluation approach selected

Why develop an evaluation plan?

- Clarifies what direction the evaluation should take based on priorities, resources, time, and skills
- Creates shared understanding of the purpose and use of evaluation results
- Fosters program transparency to stakeholders and decision makers
- Helps identify whether there are sufficient program resources to carry out the evaluation
- Facilitates smoother transition when there is staff turnover

Step 5: Develop an evaluation plan

What should your evaluation plan include?

- I. Introduction
- II. Program background
- III. Research questions
- IV. Evaluation design
- V. Sampling methods, measurement tools, and data collection procedures
- VI. Analysis plan
- VII. Reporting results approach
- VIII. Timeline, budget, evaluator qualifications

See the *Frequently Asked Questions: Evaluation* document on the Knowledge Network for more details.

Step 5: Develop an evaluation plan

I. Introduction

The introduction is intended to establish the context of your planned evaluation.

It should explain:

- The problem/issue addressed by the program
- Your program's theory of change
- Purpose of the planned evaluation
- General approach for planned evaluation

Step 5: Develop an evaluation plan

II. Program background

This section should provide detail about your program model:

It should include:

- Your program's theory of change
- Existing research supporting your program's theory of change
- Logic model
- Outcomes of interest that your evaluation will assess

Step 5: Develop an evaluation plan

III. Key evaluation research question(s)

Your evaluation plan should list each of your research question(s) that will be investigated.

Your research question(s) should be:

- Clearly stated
- Measurable
- Align with your program's theory of change and logic model

Step 5: Develop an evaluation plan

IV. Evaluation design

Your plan should detail your selected evaluation design and a rationale for why it will be used.

- When selecting a specific design, consider the following:
 - Which design will provide desired information and/or fulfill program requirements?
 - How feasible is each option?
 - Are there any ethical concerns to choosing a design?
 - What are the costs associated with each design option?

Step 5: Develop an evaluation plan

Two common types of evaluation designs:

- *Process/Implementation design:*
 - Examines how well the program matches its theoretical model
 - Confirms what the program actually does
- *Outcome/Impact design:*
 - Addresses how a program's activities relate to changes in participants or beneficiaries
 - Provides evidence as to whether the program causes observed changes

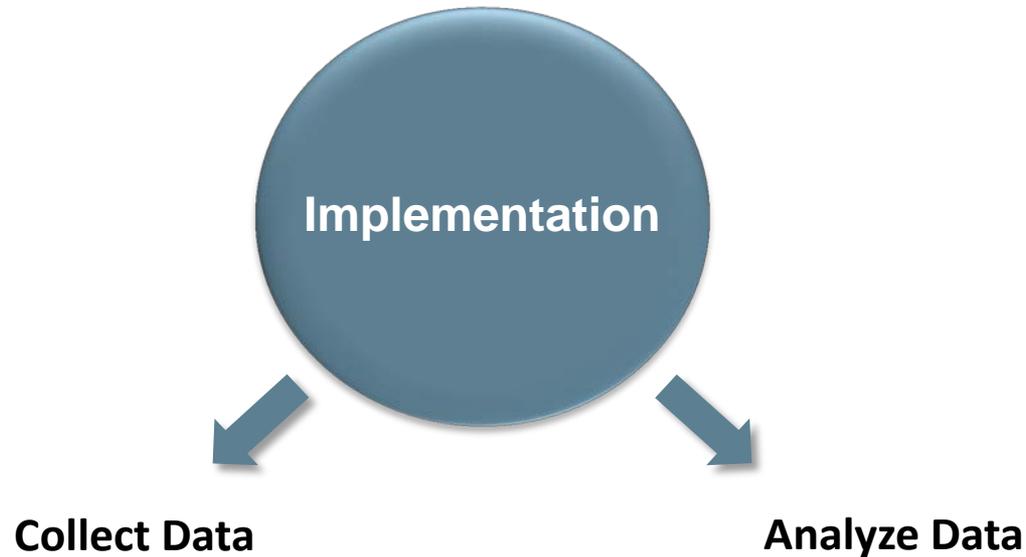
Step 5: Develop an evaluation plan

V. Sampling methods, measurement tools, and data collection procedures

This section should detail how you will collect or compile data for your evaluation by describing:

- What/who are the sources of data
- Types of data to be collected/compiled (e.g., surveys, interviews, administrative data)
- Sampling methods (if any)
- When the data will be collected and by whom
- How the data will be analyzed

Implementation steps: Collecting and analyzing data



Step 6: Collect data



- Existing data
 - Internal program data
 - External datasets or program/administrative data
- New data
 - Develop data collection instruments (interview protocols and/or questionnaires)
 - Conduct interviews
 - Field surveys

Step 7: Analyze data



- Quantitative data
 - Statistical analysis (mean, median, chi-square, t-test, ANOVA, regression, etc.)
- Qualitative data
 - Content analysis (cross-site analysis, theme identification, case study descriptions)

Step 7: Example data collection and analysis crosswalk

Process Evaluation of a Job Readiness Program for Veterans

Research question	Indicators	What is collected and how?	From whom / data sources?	When collected and by whom?	How will you analyze the data?
Is the job readiness program being implemented as designed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Member use of program curriculum during workshops b) Duration of workshops c) Participant workshop rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a - c) Members report details about workshops in logs with pre-defined categories of reporting a - b) observations of workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a - c) Members a - b) Evaluator observes participants in workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a - c) External evaluator collects the workshop logs quarterly a) Quarterly observations by the evaluator(s) using structured observation protocols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a - c) Generate frequencies on use of curriculum; average duration of workshops; and average rate of workshop attendance c) Generate frequencies and averages on quantitative data (e.g., ratings scales, frequency scales) and thematically code and analyze open-ended comments/notes

Step 7: Example data collection and analysis crosswalk

Impact Evaluation of a Job Readiness Program for Veterans

Research question	Outcome of interest	What is collected and how?	From whom / data sources?	When collected and by whom?	How will you analyze the data?
What impact does the job readiness intervention have on veterans' ability to secure and maintain employment relative to a comparison group?	Veterans' employment status	Veterans' employment status is measured with a survey.			

Step 7: Example data collection and analysis crosswalk

Impact Evaluation of a Job Readiness Program for Veterans

Research question	Outcome of interest	What is collected and how?	From whom / data sources?	When collected and by whom?	How will you analyze the data?
What impact does the job readiness intervention have on veterans' ability to secure and maintain employment relative to a comparison group?	Veterans' employment status	Veterans' employment status is measured with a survey.	<p>Veterans participating in the program serves as the intervention group.</p> <p>Veterans receiving no job assistance services serve as the comparison group.</p>	<p>The evaluator administers the survey at two time points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - before the job readiness program begins - 1 year after the job readiness program is implemented 	Calculate the difference in average outcome in the intervention group minus the difference in average outcome in the comparison group before and after treatment (difference in differences method)

Step 7: Analyze data



Consider two questions:

- What conclusions about the research questions can be drawn from the data that have been analyzed?
- What does the data suggest about the program's theory of change?

Action and improvement steps: Reporting and utilizing results



Step 8: Communicate findings

Who are the potential target audiences?

- Program staff, agency personnel, stakeholders, beneficiaries, funders, etc.

What are potential tools for communicating findings?

- Formal report, shorter memos, PowerPoint briefings, etc.

Step 8: Communicate findings

What is an evaluation report?

- Key product resulting from evaluation
- A written document that objectively describes:
 - Program background
 - Evaluation purpose, methods, procedures, and limitations
 - Evaluation results
 - Conclusions and recommendations
 - Lessons learned
 - Questions for future research

Step 8: Communicate findings

When reporting findings, it is important to:

- Report positive, as well as negative findings
- Present results that are not necessarily conclusive, but show promise and warrant further examination
- Be careful not to overstate your findings

Step 8: Communicate findings

Other Useful Products for Communication:

- Executive summary of final report (5-10 pages)
- Short research briefs (2-4 pages)
 - Graphics and pictures
 - Bulleted information
- Non-technical memos

Step 9: Apply findings and feedback for program improvement

Evaluation findings can support decisions and actions with respect to:

- Program design, implementation and effectiveness
- Program improvement
- Implementing change

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Resources on evaluation

Go to the National Service Knowledge Network for more information:

<https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/evaluation-ameri-corps>

Other courses available or coming soon:

- How to Develop a Program Logic Model
- Overview of Evaluation Designs
- How to Write an Evaluation Plan
- Budgeting for Evaluation
- And more in the coming months!

Step 7: Example data collection and analysis crosswalk

Process or Impact Evaluation of Your AmeriCorps Program

Research question	Indicators or Outcome of interest	What is collected and how?	From whom / data sources?	When collected and by whom?	How will you analyze the data?